



# Montgomery County Council

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**For Immediate Release**

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**May 17, 2001**

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Contact: Patrick Lacefield 240-777-7939 or Jean Arthur 240-777-7934

*Council's "hard choices" & "right choices" meet needs  
without tax increases...*

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## **COUNCIL BOOSTS INVESTMENT IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGE, PARKS, HUMAN SERVICES, TRANSIT IN \$2.7 BILLION BUDGET**

The Montgomery County Council today announced agreement on a \$2.7 billion operating budget that puts more money into the public schools, Montgomery College, mass transit, human services, parks, and ballfields without increasing taxes.

At a time when County revenue streams were slowing, the Council gave priority to some programs and cut others, funding the schools budget at \$15.1 million more than the County Executive's proposal. The Council funded class size reductions, technology modernization, early childhood development, more money for all-day kindergarten and class size reduction at schools with a high rate of students in poverty, air quality improvements, and more.

Similarly, the Council restored \$3 million in funding for Montgomery College, described by Councilmembers as a critical element in the County's economic development. The Council also restored \$2.6 million to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

The tax-supported budget figure of \$2,413,600,000 is about \$5.2 million more than the County Executive's recommended budget of \$2,408,400,000.

The budget, which will be formally voted on by the Council next Thursday, May 24, also amends the County's capital budget to reflect a realistic slowdown in certain construction projects and includes an adequate capital reserve to address critical needs as they arise.

The capital budget fully funds construction of the Clarksburg Middle School, for completion by September, 2004. This is a key element in addressing UpCounty school overcrowding and is a prerequisite for the construction of the future Clarksburg High School.

"There's no better reflection of what's important to a people than where we choose to put our resources," said Council President Blair Ewing. "Our kids are our future – and so we've invested more money to reduce class size, expand all-day kindergarten, and empower our teachers.

"Montgomery College plays a key role in turning out the educated work force we need in the 'new economy' – and we've made sure they have the tools they need.

"We owe a lot to the seniors who built this County. That's why seniors' transportation and other needs get the serious attention they deserve in this budget. We've also begun to step up to the plate to address our mental health crisis.

"Traffic congestion is a frustration to many Montgomery families. That's why we are continuing our balanced transportation approach, while boosting our mass transit efforts.

"Our parks and trails and ballfields contribute enormously to the quality of life our families cherish – and we've given Park and Planning what they need to do their job right."

"We've passed a budget that puts Montgomery families first," said Council Vice President Steve Silverman. "We've separated 'wants'

from ‘needs.’ We’ve not only made the hard choices, but we’ve made the right choices.

“I’m pleased that a new \$1 million transportation initiative will expand our Fare Share, Super Fare Share, and GET-IN programs to broaden incentives to employers and employees to use mass transit. That same program will explore free bus routes into densely-populated areas of our County where building roads isn’t an option.”

Over half the County operating budget will go to schools. The Council put particular priority on continuing its class size reduction initiative, expanding all-day kindergarten, increased professional development for teachers, and expansion of Early Childhood programs to make sure that County children enter school “ready to learn.”

The Council also expanded the innovative “Linkages to Learning” program –which provides convenient school-based health, mental health, and social services programs to students and their families – to five additional sites, while increasing programs at already existing sites.

The budget commits \$15 million for affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization, building on the Council’s past leadership in that area with a 200 percent increase over last year.

To improve pedestrian safety and deter red-light running, an additional 15 new cameras rotated among 20 additional sites are in the budget.

The Council included in the budget nearly \$1 million in transportation assistance for seniors.

Also, the Council has more than doubled funding of the County’s Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor from \$2.1 million to \$4.5 million.

The Council rejected a proposal to increase fees for use of County ballfields.

The Council approved a Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission operating budget which ensures a freeze on water and sewer rates for the fourth consecutive year.

Among the budget cuts made by the Council were:

- \$510,000 in savings connected with opening the new Clarksburg jail
- \$2.4 million for computer desktop modernizations in County offices
- \$1.9 million for an upgrade of the County's e-mail system
- \$250,000 for an Electronic Fingerprinting program
- \$1.2 million in county vehicle savings
- \$210,000 by eliminating the Rockville Pike mid-day shuttle
- \$2.4 million for a proposed document imaging system for county offices, and more.

Budget highlights:

#### Montgomery County Public Schools

- \$1.2 billion -- \$15.1 million more than requested by the County Executive and \$ 11.3 less than requested by the School Board, including:
- \$10.8 million more --for a total of \$28 million -- for class size Reductions, including all-day kindergarten at 11 more schools for a total of 28 schools, K-2 reduction to 17 students per teacher at 19 additional schools for a total of 38 schools, secondary school class size reduction, elementary school class size reduction, and special-education class-size reduction for students with learning and academic disabilities.
- \$3 million more -- for a total of \$35 million -- for workforce excellence and teacher professional development programs.
- \$2 million more -- for a total of \$14 million -- for continued expansion of reading and math literacy programs

- \$2.3 million more for special education improvements
- \$4 million more to improve technology, school security, and school learning environment
- \$375,000 more to improve schools indoor air quality
- \$45,000 increase for the Sharp Street program for at-risk youth
- \$63,000 increase for Linkages to Learning, expanding it to five additional schools, with expanded programming at existing sites

#### Montgomery College

- \$2 million in salary increases for faculty
- Six new faculty positions
- \$550,000 for professional development for college faculty and staff

#### Housing and Community Development

- \$15 million for the Montgomery Housing Initiative Fund to boost affordable housing and revitalization of aging neighborhoods, including:
  - \$1.5 million to the Housing Opportunities Commission to purchase 60 new Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs), the first part of a five-year plan to acquire 300 such units
  - \$600,000 for the “Building Neighborhoods to Call Home” initiative to promote neighborhood preservation
  - \$150,000 for CASA of Maryland housing initiative
- \$24,500 to Catholic Charities for transitional housing
- \$75,000 for Community (Neighborhood) Grants
- \$160,000 to Jewish Foundation for Group Homes

## Public Safety

- Provides funding to open the new county jail in Clarksburg in January for \$510,000 less than recommended by the County Executive's budget through Council working with the Department of Corrections
- Funds a \$1.1 million Integrated Justice Information System to modernize and improve communication among all public safety-related agencies to improve prosecutions of crimes, victim notification, etc. Number one priority of an interagency task force.
- Expands the red-light photo enforcement campaign to include an additional 15 new cameras at 20 additional sites, bringing the total to 25 cameras rotated among 35 different intersections.
- Hires a Traffic Analyst to provide analysis on motor vehicle and pedestrian accidents to support efforts to promote pedestrian safety, a recommendation of the County's Blue Ribbon Panel on Pedestrian and Traffic Safety
- Funds an increase in the number of check-ups with domestic violence victims made by the Sheriff's Office
- Increases compensation in the State's Attorney's office
- Funded two new medical rescue workers in the Gaithersburg and Hillandale areas
- Places full-time Victim Assistance staff in five district police stations
- \$100,000 to boost recruitment for January Police academy class
- \$55,360 in increased funding for the Humane Society, which operates the County's animal shelter
- \$32,000 for the Second Chance Wildlife Center

### Transportation & Public Works

- \$1 million to expand Fare Share and GET-IN incentives for mass transit use and to explore free bus routes in densely populated urban areas
- Continues the 44 percent decrease in fares for the two-week and 20-ride Ride-On bus passes, which have already resulted in a ten percent increase in ridership
- Increased service on 20 County bus routes
- Several new bus routes started and bus shelters constructed
- Expands the “Bethesda 8” shuttle service to evenings and Saturdays
- Increased funding for tree pruning
- Go-ahead on the Takoma-Langley Park Transit Center

### Seniors & People with Disabilities

- \$57,000 for adult foster care home monitoring
- \$970,000 for senior transportation services, including escort services
- \$20,000 for Korean American senior programs
- \$50,000 for ARC of Montgomery County’s “After All” program
- \$110,000 more for expanded chore services and respite care

## Health & Human Services

- \$570,000 set-aside to meet County mental health needs over the coming year
- \$425,000 to advance the County's Early Childhood Initiative to make sure children get what they need in the pre-school years to be ready to learn
- \$395,000 to expand the Mobile Crisis Team hours to 16 per day, services at the Men's Emergency Shelter, case management for the homeless, and the County Access Team
- Adds \$175,000 to support private mental health out-patient clinics that serve low-income, public patients
- \$367,000 for the African American Health Initiative, focusing on oral health, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and infant mortality
- \$100,000 for the Latino Health Initiative
- \$25,000 to Mental Health Association's "Families Foremost" program
- \$84,000 for Boys and Girls Homes
- \$70,000 for two community service aides at the East Spring and East County community centers

## Parks & Recreation

- Restore \$740,000 for the renovation, maintenance, and permitting of County ballfields
- Fund three new positions in the Park Police
- \$50,000 for County trails maintenance



- Restore landscaping and horticultural maintenance
- \$500,000 for Takoma Park Community Learning Center
- Funding for Latino Festival, Germantown Oktoberfest, Olney Concert series, Irish Festival
- \$50,000 for the Rosemary Hills Community School

#### Economic Development

- \$4.5 million for the County's Earned Income Tax Credit to assist the working poor
- \$150,000 for CASA Employment and Training Center
- \$90,000 for Community Ministry Micro-Enterprise project
- \$25,000 for the Hispanic Chamber Minority Procurement Center
- \$15,000 for Korean American auto technician training

#### Arts

- \$500,000 for the Bethesda Academy of Performing Arts
- \$500,000 for Black Rock Center in Germantown
- \$700,000 for Round House Theatre
- \$225,000 increase in funds for Pyramid Atlantic
- \$500,000 increase in funding for Olney Theatre

## Libraries

- Expansion of the children's room at Gaithersburg library
- Additional staff for Quince Orchard library
- Replace old or failing telephone systems at Poolesville library and one other library
- Continue funding for Literacy Council activities
- No library hours reductions

Highlights in the Capital Budget amendments to the FY 01-06 Capital Improvements Program include:

- Adds money for design for 10 new school construction projects to accommodate growth
- \$25 million for design and construction of Clarksburg Middle School by September 2004
- Reconstruction of Wayne Avenue over Sligo Creek
- Intersection improvement at Shady Grove Road and Darnestown Road
- Increase in the capital reserve. The County Executive left less than \$10 million over the next three years in the capital reserve. The Council action boosts that reserve to over \$43 million, a much more realistic assessment of future needs. # # #